

CHAPTER X

THE CIVILISATION AND THE TASKS OF THE KINGDOM

THE civilisation of Southern Italy in the century of the Norman conquest centred itself in the great cities of the western and eastern coasts; outside these there were few abbeys, and the little walled communes which took the place of the villages laid the foundations of Northern Europe in the agricultural development of the country, though well adapted to its needs, and favourable to the instinct of self-preservation which were too isolated and small for the development of the arts. The Norman conquest at first disturbing, eventually stimulated the literary life of Sicily and Campania and Apulia we find a great development of church-building with its kindred art; in Sicily the craft of Latin was more than Arab (Norman) was called into greater play by the patronages of the first Norman princes and their ministers, and in the main it is still to be seen in a few great monasteries that we trace the foundations of the